open, albeit at a cost charged upfront as premium and thus offers investors a more flexible means of hedging currency risk.

(c) The decision of overseas investors to hedge their investment is a commercial decision.

(d) To the extent that the introduction of the product provides an additional hedging tool, it is expected to facilitate overseas investors in making their investment decisions over time.

Irrigation Projects from Karnataka

*390. SHRI M. V. RAJASEKHARAN:
SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of irrigation projects from Karnataka are pending in his Ministry for approval; and

(b) if so, the present status of these projects and the steps taken to clear the projects on priority basis?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) No, Sir. At present only two irrigation projects (one major and one medium) are under various stages of appraisal in the Central Water Commission.

(b) The irrigation projects under appraisal are Singatalur (Huligudda) Lift Irrigation Scheme (major) and Basapur Lift Irrigation Scheme (medium). The clearance of the project depends upon the promptness with which the State Government arranges to provide compliance to the observations of the Central appraising agencies.

Promotion of Organic Cultivation by NABARD

*391. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:
SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the NABARD plans to promote organic cultivation of horticulture crops in mango belt in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether NABARD has got such projects for other States like Madhya Pradesh; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) promotes organic farming and has refinanced Rs. 81 lakhs in Central Bank of India sanctioned projects for organic cultivation of the Alphonso mango in Savadipatti village of Theni District, Tamil Nadu, covering 54 hectares and involving a total outlay of Rs. 120 lakhs.

(c) and (d) NABARD has not received any proposal for organic cultivation of horticulture crops in other State like Madhya Pradesh.

Differential interest rates charged by banks

*392. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the Nationalised Banks have already given huge amount of loan to monopoly houses @ 6.5 per cent interest whereas they are charging 12.5 percent interest rates from self-help women groups and 16 per cent interest on agricultural and co-operative loans;

(b) if so, reasons for such a big difference in interest rates; and

(c) whether Government would like to rationalise the various rates of interest and give loan to farmers and self-help groups @ 6.5 per cent interest per annum?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) With the deregulation of interest rates, Banks determine their own lending rates, based on their cost of operations and their assessment of risk.

(c) At the Government's initiative, the Indian Banks' Association has already advised all Public Sector Banks to reduce the interest rates on crop loans, upto Rs. 50,000/-, to a maximum of 9% per annum.